REVIEWS

The Iraq War edited by Martin Walker, Brassey's Inc., 2004, 220 pp., $19.95

Journalists write the first rough draft of history! - Phillip Graham, *Washington Post*

Martin Walker, the chief international correspondent for *United Press International* has collected some of the best writings and photos on political and military events that lead up to the U.S.-led coalition's invasion of Iraq. Walker's collection of dispatches from the front line and world capitals is a useful history of the buildup to the war. Walker's book presents the war as it was happening without the benefit of hindsight, which makes *The Iraq War* a relevant history given the current debates raging about its purpose. *The Iraq War* takes the reader through the buildup to the war, the decisions made on how to conduct the war, the actual 21 days of large-scale combat operations, and the aftermath of the war.

The Iraq War is a raw account of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Especially interesting are the dispatches from embedded reporters who, since the Vietnam War, followed coalition forces from beginning to end. Their accounts of close-quarter combat in the 21st century will set a standard for journalists for years to come. The front-line dispatches are useful tools for future commanders going to war. The reporters' style and verve, used to describe soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in combat, has a major impact on the will of citizens engaged in war. Operation Iraqi Freedom demonstrated that the media can have a positive impact on the U.S.'s ability to conduct combat operations.

After Vietnam, the gap that developed between the military and the media seriously hampered the republic's ability to conduct combat operations. The military, distrustful of media bias, kept journalists away from the front lines. The media, suspecting that the military had something to hide, sometimes wildly speculated on the methods and conduct of combat operations. The most painful example of this rift occurred during the first Gulf War when the media severely criticized Major General Barry McCaffrey's decision to order air strikes on an Iraqi armor force withdrawing on what became known as the "Highway of Death."

Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's decision to allow journalists to accompany military forces into combat was one of the great coups of the war. The inaccurate portrayal of soldiers as "baby killers" was finally exorcised during this war. To quote Walker from one of his dispatches, "We saw how hard they [coalition military forces] tried to avoid civilian casualties and the risks they took by the self-restraint." This one sentence captures the flavor of the reports filed by journalists from the front lines in Iraq. Perhaps it was because many reporters came under combat fire for the first time that their attitudes toward the men and women in uniform differed from those of another generation. Geraldo Rivera's recent reports with the 82d Airborne Division, where he refers to soldiers as "our guys" and "our mates," demonstrates the success of the embedded reporter program.

Interestingly, *The Iraq War* does not include a great deal about the weapons of mass destruction debate that existed before and during the war. The book concentrates more on the rift that developed between the U.S. and U.K. as they led the international coalition, and, to quote Donald Rumsfeld, "Old Europe."

The Iraq War should be required reading for any professional development course. Walker and his fellow journalist's insights are an honest portrayal of combat operations. Officers and noncommissioned officers at all levels should read and study this book. Embedded journalists are here to stay, just as judge advocate general and public affairs officers have become a part of any combat operation. *The Iraq War* provides an excellent study guide on how members of the military can successfully deal with the media on today's battlefield.

Walker worked for 25 years with the London newspaper, *Guardian*, where he served as bureau chief in Moscow and the United States, and as European editor before he began working for *United Press International*. He is a regular broadcaster on BBC, National Public Radio, and CNN, and has appeared as a panelist on "Inside Washington" and "Capitol Gang Sunday." He has held fellowships at the World Policy Institute at the New School for Social Research in New York, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. His numerous books include *Waking Giant: Gorbachev and Perestroika*, *The Cold War: A History,* and *America Reborn*.

JAYSON A. ALTIERI
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Beyond Valor: World War II's Rangers and Airborne Veterans Reveal the Heart of Combat by Patrick K. O'Donnell, Touchstone Books, March 2002, 366 pp., $14

Beyond Valor portrays combat as the Ranger and Airborne soldiers of WWII experienced it. Perspective is paramount as this book is intended to serve as a medium allowing veterans to share tales of heroism, humanity, and humor. While O'Donnell fills his book with detailed campaign maps and numerous photographs, *Beyond Valor*'s authority is derived from the vivid memories of soldiers. As the author states, these are the stories of "privates, corporals, sergeants, lieutenants, and a few captains — the men who fought the war from foxhole level." *Beyond Valor* is not a far-removed history lesson with the accent on famous generals or politicians. Rather, each of the 13 chapters focuses on the men who fought in combat operations of WWII.

The author, Patrick O'Donnell, is a historical consultant who assisted with making the miniseries, "Band of Brothers." O'Donnell states that *Beyond Valor* "is not really for romantics or war buffs . . . [but rather, for] preservation, done in gratitude for a generation that sacrificed so much." Indeed, the author's ability as a historian is quite evident; however, it is his ability to delve into, and expertly relate, the essence of the subject matter, which has gone missing.

While many of the individual stories are interesting, it seems as though O'Donnell simply presents them without a sense of commonality, purpose, or continuity; quite often they go wide of the chapter's purported emphasis. For example, one unit's actions constituted the awarding of a Presidential Unit Citation, yet the corresponding narrative is too short, terribly vague, and fails to answer the question, "why?" In addition, many narratives are laborious and confusing, riddled with redundancies, contradictions, and verbose narration. Storytelling technique failures are plentiful, and as a result, ultimately detract from the books mission, energy, and command.

Conversely, *Beyond Valor* does have its worthy sections. The chapters relating to the Invasion of Normandy, The Battle of the Bulge, and the Battle for Hürtgen are thick with narratives, many of which are well composed, informative, and highly intriguing. Another example is the chapter devoted entirely to America's first African-American Paratroop Infantry Battalion, the 555th.

Beyond Valor is neither a bad book, nor is it harmful to the to men it seeks to laud; it is just poorly constructed. The author would have better served his cause of "preservation and gratitude" had he wove the edited narratives into a more compelling and easily traceable story line. In the end, *Beyond Valor* reads as though O'Donnell attempted to accomplish too much, as though wanting to meld the book, *Band of Brothers,* with the epistolary collection, *Dear Mom: Letters home from Vietnam*.

JODEY C. KING

Günther Rall: A Memoir by Jill Amadio, Tangmere Productions, May 2002, pp. 304, $28.95, hardcover

Günther Rall: A Memoir is an excellent book. I met the author, Jill Amadio, at a book expo and we discussed the book. Günther Rall was a Luftwaffe ace during World War II who shot down 275 aircraft. Jill said many authors tried to get Günther to agree to participate in a book, but he was looking for a writer to tell his life story, not just his war years, and one that would not be too technical in nature. Jill definitely succeeded in fulfilling Günther Rall's wishes.

The book begins after World War I, when Germany did not have an air force. Planes were new and exciting to Günther. *The Versailles Treaty* forbade Germany's government from creating an air force. It was not until 1933, when Adolph Hitler took control of Germany and ignored the treaty, that Germany started building and creating an effective air force.

Günther Rall's recollections of his World War II experiences add a lot to understanding how the Germans fought the war. The war on the Eastern Front was completely different from the Western Front. The pilots lived in tents and moved often. The conditions were primitive and the weather was miserable. The Luftwaffe would hunt enemy planes behind the lines, quite different from the Western Front. On the Western Front, if you bailed out, you were in

friendly territory and returned to your adopted home. On the Eastern Front, if you bailed out, you were usually in Russian territory and would be killed by the Russians.

Günther Rall was shot down numerous times during the war and was told after his first crash he would never fly again. He proved them wrong and with the help of a doctor, who later became his wife, he flew to become a triple ace.

Unlike the Americans, German pilots did not have a set number of missions to fly before they could rotate home. The Germans flew until they were killed, wounded, or unable to fly. Luftwaffe pilots flew five to eight missions daily. They would land to refuel, rearm, then return to the skies. Russia's aircraft were obsolete and it was easy for the ME-109 to shoot them down. This changed later in the war when the Russians had numerical superiority as well as better fighters that were as good as, if not better than, the Luftwaffe.

The book also covers Günther's private life. He had many jobs after the war, which he performed well, but his true love was flying. He received an invitation to be part of a new German air force. Of course, he agreed and went back to flying fighters. He trained in the United States and learned to fly the F-104 Starfighter. Later, he was promoted to general and became a highly respected NATO officer.

I would like to meet General Günther Rall some day. Duty, honor, and country were his watchwords. Though he fought against the Allies during the war, he fought with honor. *Günther Rall: A Memoir* is well worth the time to read.

ERIC SHULER
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Victory at Mortain: Stopping Hitler's Panzer Counteroffensive by Mark J. Reardon, University Press of Kansas, 2002, 384 pp., including appendices and notes, $39.95

Lieutenant Colonel Reardon is a senior military historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History. He was formerly assigned to the joint staff as an assistant deputy director of operations in the National Military Command Center.

The Battle of Mortain was a desperate attempt by the German army to stop Operation Cobra, the U.S. breakout from Normandy. The most astounding aspect of this battle was not the American victory, but the fact that the Germans were unable to achieve a significant victory the first day of battle. The Germans held almost every advantage at the start of the fight: local superiority of forces, more experienced units, better equipment, and, most importantly, surprise.

The Americans, on the other hand, had a single infantry division spread over too large an area (much like the Battle of the Bulge). The only American advantages were a very good artillery capability and the continual pressure placed on German forces by the U.S. VII Corps and 3d Army. This pressure probably saved the day by overrunning German assembly areas and diverting additional forces from the attack.

Even with this pressure, the German attack achieved numerous local successes on the first night. The American defense degenerated into small-unit fights and individuals who refused to accept defeat. This defiant attitude, combined with highly effective artillery and somewhat effective close-air support, enabled American forces to survive and slowly push back the German assault over a period of several days. The battle finally ended due to 3d Army attacks that severed the German supply lines. The resulting withdrawal became better known as the Falaise Pocket and is the subject of numerous other books.

This book does not provide many insights into the application of maneuver warfare, although it does touch on attacks at the end of the battle by the 2d Armored Division and 3d Army. However, it is very good reading and clearly demonstrates the capabilities of well-integrated artillery strikes in support of defensive positions. It also demonstrates how small groups of determined soldiers can destroy the time lines of much larger attacking forces. I would recommend this book for anyone interested in World War II. This is a good book on a subject that is often overshadowed by the Normandy Invasion on one hand, and the race across France on the other.

SHAWN A. McMANAMY
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Back to the Front: An Accidental Historian Walks the Trenches of World War I by Stephen O'Shea, Walker & Company, 2001, 205 pp., $13.95

World War I destroyed empires, gave rise to of a host of totalitarian regimes, mortally wounded colonialism, and continues to influence international events from the Middle East to the Balkans. Unfortunately, both American historians and the general public largely ignore the war. *Back to the Front* is author Stephen O'Shea's account of his personal odyssey into the history and memory of the Great War. O'Shea, an Irish-Canadian journalist with family links to the conflict, writes of his experiences walking the 450-mile course of the Western Front, from its beginnings on Belgium's North Sea coast to its terminus on the Swiss border. This lively and thought-provoking "travelogue of misery" offers the American reader an excellent opportunity to put a human face on a war quickly fading from our collective memory.

By physically walking the entire length of the front, O'Shea is uniquely suited to comment on the terrain and the present condition of the Western Front. The scope of the author's journey also allows him to comment not only on the mass killing grounds of Ypres, the Somme and Verdun, but also on the largely forgotten (to Americans at least), but equally deadly, battlefields of Artois, the Champagne, and the Vosges Mountains. He also explores the quiet sectors of the front where geography and mutual exhaustion led to tacit cease-fires between the belligerents for months on end. The result is a masterful blending of history and how the events of nearly 90 years ago are remembered and commemorated today. The author's personal experiences traveling the trench lines gave him empathy for the Great War's common soldier, which is one of the true strengths of the book. O'Shea's insights into the soldier's ordeal and the human costs of the war are aided by having had two grandfathers that served with the British army during the conflict.

While the book is relatively well researched, O'Shea readily admits that he is a journalist and not a historian. He is opinionated and makes no efforts to hide his distaste for Douglas Haig, Joseph Joffre, and many of the war's other military leaders. His antimilitarism and acid comments on "the military mind" will probably antagonize many present-day soldiers. Given his subject matter, many of his barbs at the military are perhaps justified. Although Haig and Joffre's often inept leadership and indifference to the suffering of their soldiers deserve censure, it is ironic that a journalist so well versed with the terrain and conditions of the Western Front has so little sympathy for the challenges faced by the commanders.

Few, if any, officers in 1914 had any inkling of how technology and the modern state's ability to raise, equip, and maintain massive armies had changed warfare. None had the training or experience to deal with a battlefield dominated by machine guns and artillery — a battlefield, which offered no assailable flanks as their soldiers dug in to escape the fury of mass industrial warfare. In fairness to the commanders that O'Shea lambastes, it should be said that they also tried innovative weapons and tactics, such as tanks, poison, gas and aircraft, and not just manpower, to try to break the trench stalemate.

Back to the Front is an engaging and enjoyable book. Anyone with an interest in World War I, or in visiting its battlefields, will find O'Shea to be informative and provocative. However, a reader seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the war and its lessons for today's military professional, may first want to read Martin Gilbert or John Keegan's general histories of the conflict, or the more specific works of Tim Travers, Denis Winters or Martin Samuels.

RICHARD FAULKNER
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The Road To Victory: The Untold Story of World War II's Red Ball Express by David P. Colley, Brassey's, Washington, D.C., 2000, 248 pp., with illustrations and maps; $25.95

"Red ball" is a term that many of us have understood for years to mean, "move fast." It came from U.S. railroad practice, much in the same manner as "high ball," which was another variation for a signal to move out expeditiously. When I was a kid, there was even a

brand of sneakers — Red Ball Jets — that the manufacturer apparently expected kids my age to want as they were guaranteed you make you run faster.

During World War II, red ball became associated with the high-speed truck convoys that ran supplies to the front, which some writers and generals credit as winning the war. But other than one rather dull Warner Brothers film on the subject, and a 1973 television show called "Roll Out," with black actors Mel Stewart and Stu Gillam, there has really never been a good history of what red ball really was or how it worked.

This small, easy to read book (the chapters are nearly self-contained sections of the book, making it an easy read and great for the busy reader as it fits in nicely on a plane or other mode of travel) by former *Baltimore Sun* writer, David Colley, fills the gaps and presents a very good history of the Red Ball Express and the other convoy routes and systems used to supply the troops in Europe.

As many other books written since 1994 have pointed out, the invasion of Europe in 1944 was one of the most thoroughly planned and thought-through operations in military history. One of the critical problems that had to be solved was how to supply the troops in combat with the essentials — ammunition, food, water, and fuel. While the tonnages had been worked out in exercises, the main problem was going to be how to get it to the soldiers.

Railways had been the prime supply route since 1863, but in this case, it had been determined that in France this would not be possible. It was pretty much a given fact that once the U.S. Air Force was turned loose on the French SNCF, there would be little usable railway rolling stock or trackage that could be used for some time. Ergo, the decision was made to organize and use quartermaster truck regiments and companies to carry loads.

There were some considerations that had to be taken into account. First, 70 percent of truck companies were manned by black soldiers, but led by white officers. Some friction over the presence of African-Americans had been noted in England, with fights breaking out and a number of rather unfortunate racial incidents occurring between white and black units. There were a lot of bad misconceptions at the time — "blacks are lazy and cowardly, and not capable of taking their place in combat units without breaking and running away," being one of the most prevalent and racist. Since Quartermaster Corps transportation units were considered combat service support, most blacks that were drafted wound up in these units, or other similar service units such as laundry, bakery, shower, and bath units.

Needless to say, some of the other predictions were not working out either. Ports and facilities that planners had counted on for bringing in supplies were not taken on schedule, or the Germans had done too thorough a job in destroying the physical plant in those ports to permit them to be used without a lot of rebuilding and repair first. As a result, most of the supplies had to come into the beachhead in Normandy, and the only way to move them was by truck.

Once the U.S. Army broke out from the hedgerow country, the other problem was that the Germans collapsed faster than anticipated and U.S. troops advanced faster than was considered likely. U.S. forces were not anticipated to reach the Seine River until D+90, but they actually did it by D+79. This placed an even greater strain on supply lines, as they got longer, and the demand for supplies went up geometrically.

The figures that were being used by planners saw a flow of supplies being equal to 27,000 long tons (30,000 short tons) a day for 12 divisions, 37,000 long tons for 16 divisions, and 46,000 tons for 21 divisions. This required the use of channel ports and multiple supply routes. The reality of things was that this was not possible. Only small ports with capacities of around 1,000 tons per day became available to U.S. transshipment points for supplies, so much of it had to come in over the manmade facilities near the original invasion beaches. In July 1944, 392,000 tons came in via those beaches — some 88 percent of all supplies delivered — and all of it had to be moved by truck.

Once lines began to stretch out and supply lines began to clog or slow down, things began to cause grave headaches for planners, and the two supported U.S. Army Groups (1st and 12th) had to slow to await supply. General Omar Bradley glumly admitted at the time that: "Logistics — this is the dullest subject in the world…but logistics were the lifeblood of the Allied armies in France." 1st and 3d U.S. Armies each used about 400,000 gallons of gasoline a day, all of which was provided in 5-gallon jerry cans via truck. Without enough fuel, the offensive ground to a halt.

The first attempts at setting up dedicated routes to move supplies began on 14 July, when bulk shipments using 750- and 2000-gallon tankers began to inland depots. On 23 August 1944, a meeting was held to fix the problem. The result was the Red Ball Express, a concept based on some preliminary efforts in England to move priority shipments without interference.

The concept was simple. They set up a single, round-robin route and kept strict enforcement of the route to ensure that supply truck convoys ran undisturbed to the front and returned. Each truck carried up to 7,000 pounds of cargo to dumps near the front, where units would pick them up, The trucks then went back to the supply depots to carry out maintenance, reload, and continue.

Once the route was rolling, a complete circuit took about 3 days from start to start. The initial start saw the commitment of 67 quartermaster truck companies and 3,358 trucks. This quickly shot up to 132 companies and 5,958 trucks in only 4 days. The numbers were based on the fact that one-third of the trucks were moving forward, one-third were returning, and one-third would be down for maintenance at any given time.

While the African-American troops felt insulted at the treatment that they received and the comments about not being fit combat troops, many of them took pride in this job, and found out very quickly that "noncombat" was a relative term. Many times they had to fight it out with bypassed pockets of Germans or German fighters trying to strafe the convoys. Eventually 4,560 volunteered for service in infantry units, and over 2,200 were trained, assigned, and served with distinction. But in the racial environment of the 1940s, this was glossed over until the mid 1990s. Mr. Colley points out how the failures of white units, such as the overrunning and capture of the 106th Infantry Division at the Battle of the Bulge, were spun into heroic efforts, rather than inglorious defeat and surrender, and some African-American veterans still resent this to this day.

But there were other problems. Soldiers soon found that they could have a good time and do well on these runs, and "breakdowns" became common near either known black market sites, brothels, or just places where soldiers could swap some gas or cigarettes for food, wine, or time with prostitutes.

Overall, the Red Ball Express got the job done, but just barely. Trucks were worn out or destroyed in great numbers, and, at one point, all units with GMC CCKW-type trucks were stripped of many of them to make up for losses and damage. Black marketeering also cost a goodly amount of the supplies, and some soldiers in the book express regret today for those actions.

One thing most people do not realize, and Mr. Colley points out, is that the Red Ball Express, per se, only covered one area and only lasted until mid-October 1944. The concept was refined and reworked, and other routes were used later on — White Ball, Red Lion, Green Diamond, ABC, XYZ, and even a Little Red Ball during the Battle of the Bulge. The names changed on staff maps, but to the soldiers driving the trucks, they were all still part of the Red Ball Express.

As noted earlier, the Red Ball Express has not been well served by writers or Hollywood, partially for the reasons cited by General Bradley — it seemed dull. The movie from Warner Brothers further added insult to injury, for other than using a cliché-ridden script and a romance between two white officers over a nurse, the drivers were all white and no blacks were shown. The 1973 comedy, *Roll Out*, came out during a time when no one was sure what to do with service comedies — *Gomer Pyle* was on its way out, *MASH* was on its way in, and *Hogan's Heroes* split the difference. This show tended to revolve around static sets as Stu Gillam tried to come up with Bilko-esque scams more suited to the Phil Silvers sergeant.

They deserve better, and Mr. Colley has provided an excellent and highly entertaining read on their achievements.

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